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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to examine the job attitudes of public two-year college instructors of developmental/remedial courses. The study used a path-analytical theoretical model to examine the relationships among the instructors' self-role congruence and length of service (the independent variables); total job satisfaction and organizational commitment (the intervening variables); and propensity to leave the institution (the ultimate dependent variable). The study sample consisted of 562 public community college instructors in New York State who taught developmental/remedial courses as all or part of their work load. Study findings, based on survey responses from 244 instructors, revealed: (1) high levels of self-role congruence were associated with increased levels of total job satisfaction and organizational commitment; (2) self-role congruence, length of service, total job satisfaction, and organizational commitment were confirmed as important variables with reference to the desirability of staying with or leaving the college; and (3) the propensity to leave a position resulted directly from limited length of service, general job dissatisfaction, and decreases in organizational commitment and resulted indirectly from self-role incongruence and general dissatisfaction. The study report includes a review of related literature and a discussion of the implications of the findings for improving the work environment for developmental education teachers. (HB)

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A STUDY OF COMMITMENT TO THE WORK ORGANIZATION AMONG COMMUNITY COLLEGE TEACHERS OF DEVELOPMENTAL/REMEDIAL COURSES

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This paper was prepared for a presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, Louisana, April 23-27, 1984.

Abstract

During the last several years, the problem of employee commitment to the work organization has stimulated increasing interest and research activity. Such concern is mounting because commitment is seen as an important construct which may help to explain the complex problems that are associated with employee performance and organizational effectiveness. The purpose of this study was to examine the job attitudes of public two-year college instructors of developmental/remedial courses. Because a systematic examination of the work environment cannot be done in a straightforward manner, this research focussed on the direct and indirect effects among self-role congruence, length of service, total job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and the propensity to leave among those teachers. Through multiple regression and path analyses, the findings in this study clearly underscored the importance of self-role congruence in understanding employee job attitudes. As hypothesized in the path model, high levels of self-role congruence appeared to be associated with increased levels of total job satisfaction and organization commitment. Self-role congruence was found to be directly related to job satisfaction and commitment to the organization, and it also demonstrated a strong indirect effect on commitment through the intervening effect of job satisfaction. Self-role congruence, length of service, total job satisfaction, and organizational commitment were also confirmed as important variables with reference to the desirability of staying with or leaving the employing organization. The importance of the findings is discussed with reference to improving the work environment for developmental education teachers.

A STUDY OF COMMITMENT TO THE WORK ORGANIZATION AMONG COMMUNITY COLLEGE TEACHERS OF DEVELOPMENTAL/REMEDIAL COURSES

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Introduction and Objectives

During the last several years, the problem of employee commitment to the work organization has stimulated increasing interest and research activity. Such concern is mounting because commitment is seen as an important construct which may help to explain the complex problems that are associated with employee performance and organizational effectiveness (Morris & Sherman, 1981; Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979).

This study had two overarching objectives; one was methodological and the other was substantive. The first was a response to the need, as expressed in the organizational behavior literature, for more sophisticated approaches to the study of empolyee job attitudes (Mobely, 1982; Muchinsky & Tuttle, 1979); the latter was addressed to the important problem concerning the motivation of teachers in public community colleges (Jorgenson, 1980).

The Problem

The purpose of this study was to examine the job attitudes of public two-year college instructors of developmental education courses from a path-analytic perspective. The research focussed, then, on the direct and indirect effects among the self-role congruence, length of service, total job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and the propensity to leave among such teachers within New York State.

Importance of the Study

Since the inception of open admissions, most of the nation's institutions of higher education have found it necessary to offer remediation in reading, writing, and mathematics to today's poorly equipped high school graduates (Roueche, 1981-1982). While the lack of the basic skills among entering students is a concern throughout postsecondary education, providing developmental education to the underprepared student is seen as the primary responsibility of the two-year community college (Kraetsch, 1980).

But few community college faculty members are said to have been specifically prepared to teach the basic skills to the kinds of large, heterogeneous groups of students found at that level (Cohen & Brawer, 1982), and many reportedly view remediation as an inappropriate function of the institution (Cosand, 1979). These issues give rise to the crucial question concerning the match between the teachers' needs, abilities, backgrounds, and the like, and the requirements of their work roles. This is especially the case when it is considered that the congruence between the characteristics of the individual and the demands of the job impacts directly upon job satisfaction and commitment to the work organization (Getzels, Lipman & Campbell, 1968).

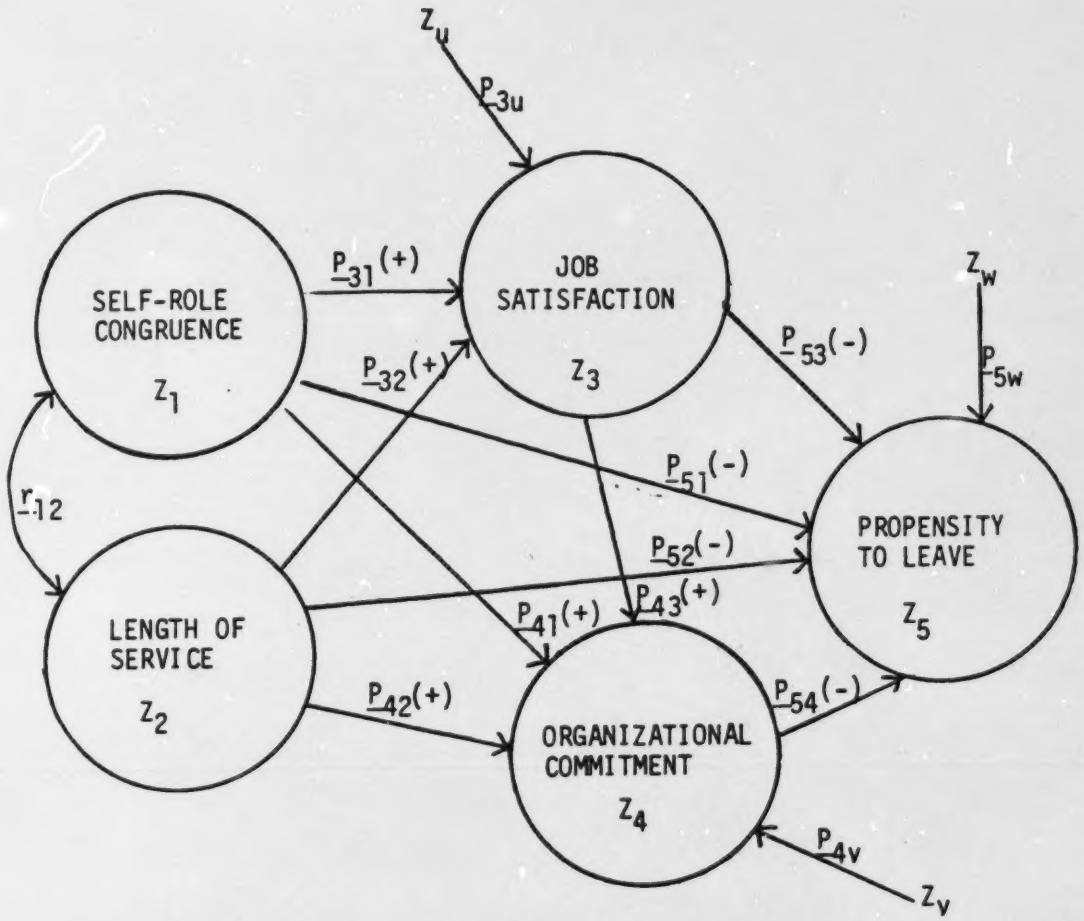
It has been noted that if the community college is to survive as a unique institution in this decade and beyond, the problems of organizing meaningful developmental programs, raising educational standards, and bolstering sagging teacher morale must be addressed (Friedlander, 1982; McCabe, 1981). Since the instructors who are directly involved in the remediation process have been traditionally given few incentives and little or no status (Jorgenson, 1980), it is important to understand more about the work environment and job attitudes of those teachers.

This study is also important because of the need for additional research

on the relationship of length of service to job satisfaction (Ronen, 1978), and the impact of length of service and job satisfaction upon the desire to remain in the job (Mobley, 1982). It has been further recommended that the effects of job satisfaction and organizational commitment on job withdrawal attitudes be examined (Koch & Steers, 1978; Steers & Mowday, 1981). Reportedly, too few previous research efforts have taken a multivariate approach in the study of commitment (Morris & Sherman, 1982) and the turnover process (Mobley, 1982); even fewer attempts are said to have been made to place the concept of role within a multivariate framework for the purpose of making causal inferences (Bedeian & Armenakis, 1981). Finally, this study is important because, while an inverse relationship has been generally established between job satisfaction and the desire to leave, the question concerning the causal order among satisfaction, commitment and the propensity to leave has not been fully answered.

The Theoretical Model

The path model in Figure 1 illustrates the hypothesized relationships that were tested in this study. Self-role congruence and length of service are independent (exogenous) variables whose variability is assumed to be determined by causes outside the interrelated system of variables. Total job satisfaction and organizational commitment are intervening (endogenous) variables, and propensity to leave is the ultimate dependent (endogenous) variable. The variation of each endogenous variable is explained by a linear combination of the exogenous and endogenous variables that precede it in the model. In those systems of relationships where the variation of an endogenous variable is not completely determined by prior variables, a residual variable (e.g., Z_u, Z_v, or Z_w) is introduced to account for the variance which is left unexplained.



(1) $Z_3 = P_{31}Z_1 + P_{32}Z_2 + P_{3u}Z_u$

(2) $Z_4 = P_{41}Z_1 + P_{42}Z_2 + P_{43}Z_3 + P_{4v}Z_v$

(3) $Z_5 = P_{51}Z_1 + P_{52}Z_2 + P_{53}Z_3 + P_{54}Z_4 + P_{5w}Z_w$

Figure 1. The path model

The causal effect of one variable upon another is in the direction of the unidirectional (one-way) arrows. The two-headed arrow indicates that there will be no causal interpretation for the connected variables. The structural equations(see equations (1), (2), & (3) in Figure 1) are mathematical representations of the path model, indicating the postulated causal and noncausal relationships among the variables under consideration. The path coefficient P_{ij} denotes the magnitude of the effect of the prior variable Z_j on the dependent variable Z_i. The correlation coefficient r_{12} indicates the magnitude of the noncausal relationship between Z_1 and Z_2 (Land, 1969).

Direct and indirect effects. A variable A is said to have a direct effect upon the variable C if the impact of A upon C is not transmitted by a third (intervening) variable. On the other hand, the variable A is said to have an indirect effect upon C if there are variables B_1 , B_2 , . . . , B_n such that A is directly related to B_1 , B_1 is directly related to B_2 , . . . , and B_n is directly related to C. In such an instance, the B_i are called intervening or mediating variables.

Turning once again to the model in Figure 1, self-role congruence is predicted to be directly and positively related to total job satisfaction and organizational commitment; it is also hypothesized to be indirectly and positively related to organizational commitment through the intervening effect of total job satisfaction. Additionally, self-role congruence is proposed to have three indirect and negative effects on propensity to leave; two of the indirect effects may be traced through the mediating effects of total job satisfaction and organizational commitment individually, and the third may be seen through the consecutively intervening effects of both job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The other hypothesized effects may be deduced from the model using the discussion on the effects of self-role congruence

as a guide.

There is both theoretical and empirical support for the model in Figure 1. According to March and Simon (1958), the congruence of individual characteristics and job requirements can lead to job satisfaction, and job satisfaction in turn is a major determinant as to whether an individual will remain in or leave the work environment. In addition, self-role congruence has been theoretically proposed as a direct precursor of both job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Getzels et al., 1968). Length of service is an important individual-organizational variable which has been found to be positively related to job satisfaction (Ronen, 1978) and organizational commitment (Hrebiniak & Alutto, 1972); length of service has also been found to have a significant negative impact upon propensity to leave (Koch & Steers, 1978).

Satisfaction and commitment have been described as two related but distinguishable attitude constructs such that each provides unique information concerning the individual's relationship to the organization (Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974). It has been further noted that commitment may be viewed as an intervening variable between job satisfaction and job withdrawal behavior (Koch & Steers, 1978). Finally, through the use of a complex model on the turnover process, Steers and Mowday (1981) proposed that both satisfaction and commitment, as mediating variables, have direct effects on the desire/intent to leave the work organization.

Method

The research population for this study consisted of the public community college instructors within New York State who teach developmental/remedial courses as all or part of their work load. The data were collected through the distribution of a mailed questionnaire to 562 randomly selected teachers, from whom 244 usable questionnaires were received.

Consistent with the recommendations throughout the literature on job attitudes and the withdrawal process, a multivariate approach was adopted to analyze the relationships in this study. In that connection, the primary statisitcal treatment was multiple regression correlational analysis (MRA). Path analysis, a derivative of MRA in recursive systems (with causal effects in one direction), was used to explain the direct and indirect effects among the variables in the model. The statistical significance of the standardized partial regression weights (betas), the coefficient of multiple correlation (R), and the coefficient of multiple determination (R^2) was based upon F-tests results at the .05 level.

Multiple regression correlational analysis (MRA) involves the use of two or more independent variables to estimate or explain a given dependent variable. Through MRA, one can assess the variance contributed jointly by a given set of independent variables to a dependent variable. One can also determine the contribution of any one independent variable to the dependent variable while holding the effects of the other independent variables constant. Those properties made the use of MRA an invaluable tool in this study. The general raw score form of the multiple linear regression equation with two independent variables is as follows (Kerlinger & Pedhazur, 1973):

$$X_3 = A + b_{31}X_1 + b_{32}X_2 + e, \text{ where}$$

X_3 = the observed dependent variable

A = the intercept constant

b_{31} = the unstandardized partial regression coefficient obtained as a result of regressing X_3 on X_1 when the effect of X_2 is held constant. This coefficient represents the number of units of change in X_3 for each unit of change in X_1

b_{32} = the unstandardized partial regression coefficient obtained as a result of regressing X_3 on X_2 when the effect of X_1 is held constant. This coefficient represents the number od units of change in X_3 for each unit of change in X_2

e = the error or residual term.

The multiple linear regression equation on page 7 can be easily transformed mathematically so as to be identical with the structural equation (1) of the path model on page 3.

Path analysis is basically concerned with determining estimates of the magnitudes of the linkages between pairs of variables in a given causal system. The estimates may be obtained by regressing each dependent (exogenous) variable on those variables that precede it in the model. The estimates, which are called path coefficients, are simply standardized partial regression weights (Asher, 1976).

Instruments

The self-role congruence of the respondents was determined with a five-item questionnaire, which was anchored on a 7-point, Likert-type scale with descriptors ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Three items were added to Feldman's (1976) two-item questionnaire to more fully incorporate the meaning of self-role congruence as used in this study (see Hill, 1983). An example of the items is: "My job provides me with opportunities to use valued, work-related skills that I possess and wish to use." The scores on the individual items were summed to form an index which ranged from 5 to 35. The greater the sum, the greater was the respondent's self-role congruence. The coefficient alpha reliability for the scale with the current sample was .68.

Total job satisfaction was assessed in this study with the Job Descriptive Index (JDI) (Smith, Kendall, & Hull, 1969). The instrument is composed of the following five dimensions: work, supervision, co-workers, pay, and promotion. Sixty-five of the original 72 items were used. The following seven descriptors were eliminated because they were thought to be too harsh, too ambiguous, or too irrelevant to be used with instructors in educational

institutions: "hot" and "on your feet" of the work scale; "slow," "stupid," "fast," and "easy to make enemies" of the co-workers scale; and "satisfactory profit sharing " of the pay scale. The respondent was directed to circle "Y" for any item that described a given aspect of the job, an "N" for any item that did not describe the given dimension, and a "?" if he/she were undecided. Yes to a positive item and No to a negative item were scored with a 3. "?" to any item was given a score of 1. Yes to a negative item and No to a positive item were scored with 0. The scores for all of the items were summed to form an index of total job satisfaction. Coefficient alpha reliability for the overall scale with this sample was .90.

The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) (Porter et al., 1974) was used to determine each respondent's "belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values," "willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization," and "the desire to maintain organizational membership." The OCQ contains 15 statements, each of which was anchored on a 7-point, Likert-type scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The responses to the items were added to arrive at a summary indicator of an employee's organizational commitment. The index ranged from 15 to 105, with the higher values indicating greater commitment to the organization. Coefficient alpha reliability for the scale was .92.

The propensity to leave questionnaire (Hrebiniak & Alutto, 1972) was used to assess each respondent's attitude toward leaving his/her current job. Each respondent was asked to state whether he/she would be willing to leave the organization given an alternative job that offered slightly more pay, slightly more freedom to be professionally creative, slightly more status, and slightly friendlier co-workers. For each statement, the respondent gave one of the following responses: "no, definitely not," "uncertain," and "yes, definitely." The scoring weights ranged from 1 to 3. The propensity to leave index, which

was determined by summing the scores of the individual items, ranged from 4 to 12, with 8 indicating uncertainty. The greater the index, the greater was the employee's desire to leave the organization. Coefficient alpha relaibility for the scale with this sample was .86.

The length of service for each respondent was determined by asking the following question: "For how many years as of 6/1/82 have you taught at your institution?"

Hierarchical Regression Procedures

To obtain the path coefficients for the variables in the path model (see p. 3), each endogenous variable was regressed on all variables that preceded it in the model (Asher, 1976). In particular, total job satisfaction was regressed on self-role congruence and length of service. Since there was no causal interpretation for either variable, they were both entered into the analysis on the same step. Organizational commitment was regressed on self-role congruence, length of service, and total job satisfaction, Again, self-role congruence and length of service were entered simultaneously on the first step, and satisfaction was entered on the second step. Propensity to leave was regressed on all of the previously mentioned variables, with the order of entry for self-role congruence, length of service, and total job satisfaction being the same as mentioned earlier and with commitment being entered on the third and final step.

One variable was considered to have a direct effect on another if the partial regression (path) coefficient, which was obtained as a result of regressing the second variable on the first, was both significant (at the .05 level) and meaningful (i.e., with an absolute value which was at least equal to .05) (Griffin, 1977; Kerlinger & Pedhazur, 1973).

Results

Table 1 contains the zero-order correlations among the variables in this

Table 1: Correlations Among Variables

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Self-role congruence	--				
2. Length of service	.04	--			
3. Total job satisfaction	.56***	.00	--		
4. Organizational commitment	.57***	.05	.66***	--	
5. Propensity to leave	-.46***	-.13*	-.59***	-.71***	--

*$p < .05$.
**$p < .01$.
***$p < .001$.

study. All of the variables in the theoretical model were significantly related to propensity to leave. Length of service was not related to self-role congruence ($r = .04$), total job satisfaction ($r = .00$) and organizational Commitment ($r = .05$). Self-role congruence was strongly related to total job satisfaction ($r = .56$) and organizational commitment ($r = .57$), and job satisfaction and organizational commitment displayed a strong bivariate relationship ($r = .66$).

The results of hierarchical multiple regression analysis to test the research model in this study are illustrated in Table 2. The regression of total job satisfaction on self-role congruence and length of service (column 1) resulted in a significant, high and positive beta weight for self-role congruence ($P_{31} = .56$, $p < .001$), and a beta weight for length of service ($P_{32} = .01$, n.s.) which was nonsignificant and virtually zero.

The regression of organizational commitment on self-role congruence, length of service, and total job satisfaction (column 3 of Table 2) resulted in a significant, moderate and positive beta weight for self-role congruence ($P_{41} = .28$, $p < .001$), a nonsignificant and meaningless beta weight for length of service ($P_{42} = -.04$, n.s.), and a significant, high and positive beta weight for total

Table 2

Hierarchical Regression Analysis (Standardized Coefficients or Betas) with Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment and Propensity to Leave as Dependent Variables

		Job Satisfaction		Organizational Commitment		Propensity To Leave	
Step	Independent Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Self-Role Congruence	.56***	.56***	.28***	.29***	-.03	--
	Length of Service	.01	--	-.04	--	-.10*	-.10*
2	Total Job Satisfaction	--	--	.50***	.50***	-.22***	-.23***
3	Organizational Commitment	--	--	--	--	-.54***	-.55***
	R	.32***	.32***	.49***	.49***	.54***	.54***

*p $\lesssim$ .05.
**p $\lesssim$ .01.
***p $\lesssim$ .001.

job satisfaction (P_{43} = .50, p $\lesssim$ .001).

The regression of propensity to leave on self-role congruence, length of service, total job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (column 5) resulted in a nonsignificant and meaningless beta for self-role congruence (P_{51} = -.03, n.s.), and significant and negative betas for length of service (P_{52} = -.10, p $\lesssim$ .05), total job satisfaction (P_{53} = -.22, p $\lesssim$ .001) and organizational commitment (P_{54} = -.54, p $\lesssim$ .001).

The "Trimmed" Model

By eliminating from further analysis those variables in columns 1, 3 and 5 of Table 2 that were nonsignificant and meaningless, the first step toward what

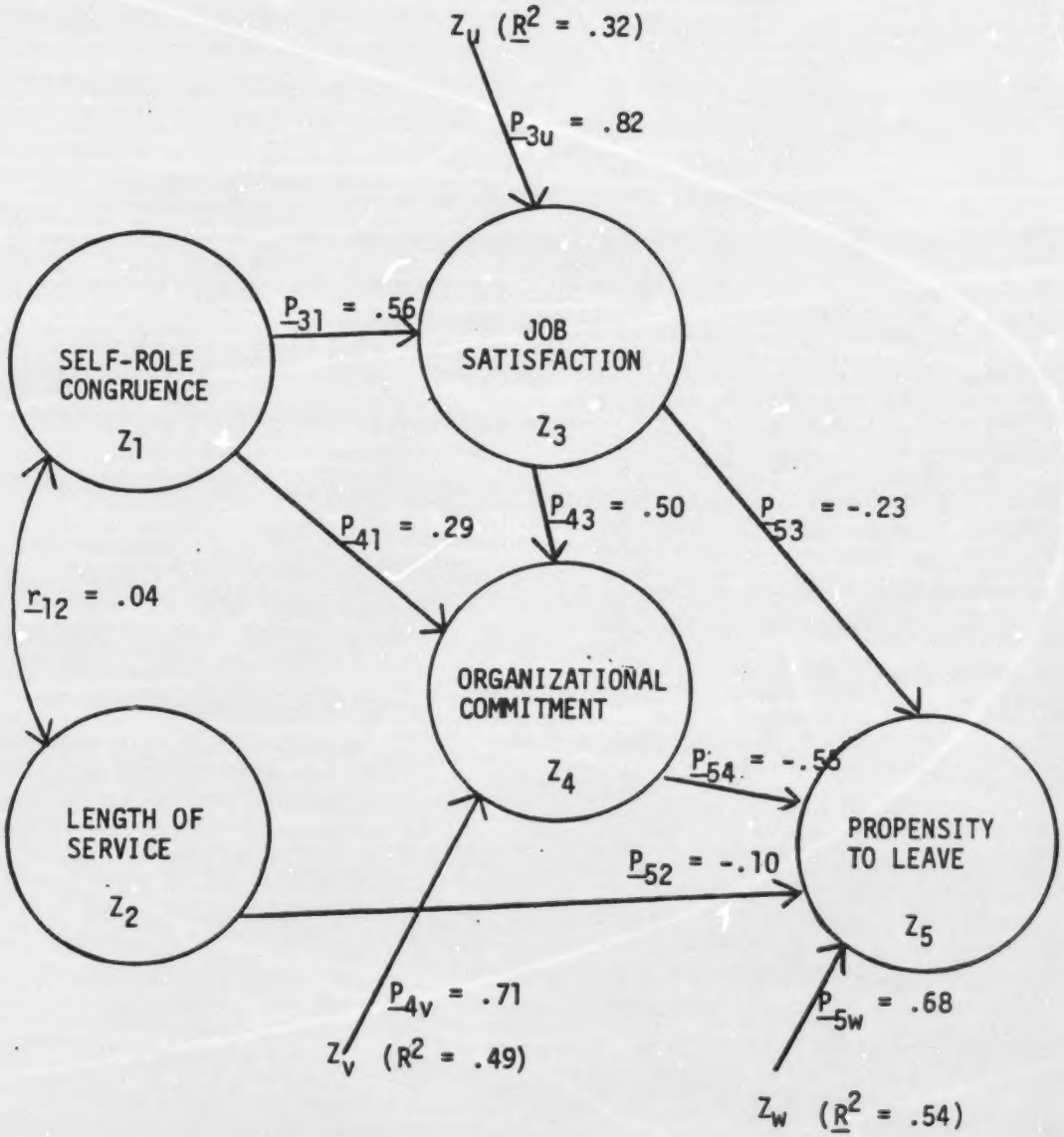
Heise (1969) referred to as "theory trimming" was performed. the second step involved estimating the "trimmed" model through the use of regression analysis to determine the resulting path coefficients for the retained variables (Griffin, 1977, p. 15; Heise, 1969, p. 195). Columns 2, 4, and 6 in Table 2 (p. 12) contain those coefficients.

The regression results in Table 2 and the "trimmed" model in Figure 2 indicate that self-role congruence (p_{31} = .56, $p < .001$) made a direct and positive impact upon total job satisfaction (column 2 of Table 2); self-role congruence (P_{41} = .29, $p < .001$) and total job satisfaction (P_{43} = .50, $p < .001$) made direct and positive impacts upon organizational commitment (column 4 of Table 2); and length of service (P_{52} = -.10, $p < .05$), total job satisfaction (P_{53} = -.23, $p < .001$), and organizational commitment (P_{54} = -.55, $p < .001$) had direct and negative effects on propensity to leave (column 6 of Table 2).

The fact that length of service did not have direct effects on total job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and that self-role congruence did not make a direct impact upon propensity to leave is characterized in the structural equations by the omission of the generalized path coefficients P_{32} in equation (1), P_{42} in equation (2), and P_{51} in equation (3) of Figure 1.

The path coefficient for the path from each residual (error) term (Z_u , Z_v, or Z_w) in Figure 2 to the dependent variable to which it is associated was determined by $\sqrt{1 - R^2}$, where R^2 is the amount of variance accounted for in the dependent variable by the variables that precede it in the model. For example, $P_{3u} = \sqrt{1 - .32} = \sqrt{.68} = .82$ (Asher, 1976, p. 31; Kim & Kohout, 1975, p. 387).

The "trimmed" path model in Figure 2 reveals that the data in this study provided strong support for the hypothesized relationships. Additionally, a test of the "goodness of fit" of the "trimmed" model to the empirical data resulted



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(3) $Z_5 = P_{52}Z_2 + P_{53}Z_2 + P_{54}Z_4 + P_{5w}Z_w$

Figure 2. The "trimmed" path model.

in an almost perfect reconstruction of the observed zero-order correlations among the variables in the model. As a result of the success of that test, it was concluded that the research model on the job attitudes of community college instructors of remedial courses included only significant coefficients, excluded no significant coefficients, and was consistent with the observed empirical data (Griffin, 1977). Moreover, the ability to reconstruct the zero-order correlations was seen as support for the important assumption of uncorrelated residuals as the path analysis for this study was conducted (Billings & Wroten, 1978; Griffin, 1977).

The findings in this study clearly underscored the importance of self-role congruence in understanding employee job attitudes. As hypothesized in the model, high levels of self-role congruence appeared to be associated with increased levels of total job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Self-role congruence was found to be directly related to job satisfaction and commitment to the organization, and it also demonstrated a strong indirect effect on commitment through the intervening effect of job satisfaction. Self-role congruence, length of service, total job satisfaction, and organizational commitment were also confirmed as important variables with reference to the disirability of staying with or leaving the employing organization. The propensity to leave among two-year college instructors of developmental courses resulted directly from limited lengths of service, general dissatisfaction, and decrements in organizational commitment; it resulted indirectly from self-role incongruence and general dissatisfaction.

Importance of the Findings

The findings from this study generally confirmed the ordering of the variables that were used in the path model for this research effort. The results also revealed that the recursive model which includes all possible paths from satisfaction and commitment (in that order) to propensity to leave is a tenable configura-

tion. Prior to this study, that model had not been empirically examined.

When viewed from a practical perspective, the results of this study suggest that if community college leaders seek to increase commitment to the institution among their developmental faculty, the administrators must work to bring about improvements in the teachers' self-role congruence and total job satisfaction. The findings from this study revealed that two-year college instructors of remedial courses who stated that they were in the "right" jobs, they could use certain "valued" abilities and skills in their work, their preparation was consistent with the requirements of their work roles, and the like, expressed more total job satisfaction and organizational commitment as a direct result of such self-role congruence; the teachers were also more committed to their employing institutions as a direct consequence of their increased job satisfaction.

Since total job satisfaction was used in this study as a composite of five job dimensions, the present results also imply that improvements in the work itself, its immediate social context (co-workers), promotional opportunities, and the like, should do much to increase employee commitment to the work organization and to decrease the desire to leave. Improving the work that instructors of developmental courses do may well be accomplished when the teachers can view their tasks as, for example, satisfying, useful, challenging, and respected. Those states may be realized through greater support and concern for developmental education programs from those in decision-making positions within the two-year institution.

The most important step that community college administrators can take in an effort to improve remedial programs is to use greater care in the selection, placement, and training of developmental faculty, so that the teachers' needs, abilities, and expectations will more closely match the demands of their work roles. As the findings in this study strongly suggest, a closer "fit" between employee

characteristics and the requirements of the job should result in higher levels of positive job attitudes.

A lack of congruence, on the other hand, could possibly produce dissatisfied and uncommitted instructors who may simply go through the motions of teaching rather than work to bring about genuine student development. Such a situation could produce unneeded stagnation within the community college, because many of its faculty members are becoming locked in with the institution as a result of their increasing lengths of service, tenure, other accrued organizational benefits, and the relative absence of acceptable alternative employment opportunities.

If teachers, or workers in general, are forced by such circumstances to remain in jobs in which they cannot satisfy their needs or accomplish their goals, there is little reason to expect that they will be motivated to work toward achieving the aims and objectives of their institutions beyond mere role specifications.

Conclusion

The comprehensive community college is defined as an open-door institution, one of whose six main functions is to provide remedial education to heterogeneous groups of students with wide ranges in ability, interest, previous academic success, educational aspiration, and the like. The findings in this study suggested several implications for the improvement in the delivery of remedial services within the two-year college. The betterment of the programs is crucial because until the public schools of this nation begin to prepare our youth in the fundamentals of reading, writing, and mathematics that are required in an ever-changing society, the two-year community college will continue to enroll increasingly large numbers of students who are seriously deficient in those basic skills. Since a literate citizenry with reasonable levels of quantitative abilities is essential to this country's welfare, both domestically and on the international

scene, meaningful developmental programs at the community college are a must.

An improved institutional climate with reference to the overall remediation process should make for greater self-role congruence, job satisfaction, and commitment to the organization among two-year college instructors. As a result, those teachers may enthusiastically provide the necessary stimulus for greater growth and development among the academically disadvantaged students.

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